



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2006
Washington Soldiers Home
Orting, Washington

PRESENT:

Bill Schrier, Chair – American Legion
Dick Whipple, Vice-Chair – VFW
Mike Gregoire – First Gentleman
Roy Compton – AX- POWs
Barry Pfundt - AMVET
Rupert Markham – Washington Soldiers Home
Michael Serpa – Washington Veterans Home
Dennis Primoli – At Large
Lloyd Burroughs – NABVETS
Mary Jo Cahill – American Red Cross
Deryl McCarty – MOAA
John Lee – Director, WDVA
April Harris – Executive Asst. WDVA

EXCUSED:

George Edmundson - VVA
Charles Karczewski - PVA
Michele Colpaert - DAV
Phil Ruhmshottel – Marine
Corps. League
Robert Harcum - MOPH

INVOCATION – Dick Whipple
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
CALL TO ORDER

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS – Bill Schrier

Bill introduced the new member of the VAAC, Mike Serpa, who represents the Washington Veterans Home. Mike will serve a four-year term on the committee.

This was also a Commanders' Call. Bill introduced the commanders who were present:

Charles Kelley – American Legion
Bruce McKinty – MOPH
Bob Caruthers – DAV
Fred George – AMVETS
Gary Pearson – PVA

Also in attendance and representing the VFW, was Past-Commander, Frosty Hulsey.

MINUTES APPROVAL:

Minutes were accepted as written with the following corrections:

The next meeting is March 15 vs. March 17 in Spokane.

Dennis Primoli and Barry Pfundt were excused from the meeting.

FIRST GENTLEMAN, MIKE GREGOIRE:

First Mike reported on his many activities since the last VAAC meeting. He attended the funerals of Washington State soldiers, including the memorial for the three helicopter crew who died in a training mission.

He attended the lighting of the first national Christmas tree, from Washington State, in Washington D.C. has had several visits to eastern Washington, welcomed home returnees from Iraq and continues his reading program in the public schools.

WDVA BUDGET AND STATE OF THE STATE – Gary Condra, WDVA CFO and John Lee:

Gary Condra provided a PowerPoint presentation of the current budget requests for the supplemental as well as the next biennium. Veterans Affairs has increased their budget by almost twenty percent, thanks to the Governor and her commitment to serving veterans.

John Lee will participate in a press conference with the Governor on Monday, January 22nd, to recognize the effort for the eastern Washington cemetery. This is an \$8 million project including the land acquisition. The Governor has given her approval for spending authority. The federal VA will reimburse the state upon completion. \$500,000 will go toward the design of the cemetery and \$7 million will provide for the construction and equipment. The groundbreaking will be 11/11/08 and the first veteran will be interred on 11/11/09.

Two sites have been identified and geological testing is being conducted. This will be a national monument, not just a cemetery. The site will hopefully, be selected by the end of the month. Both sites are on the west side of Medical Lake and are approximately 80 acres. Any construction of cemeteries in Idaho will not affect reimbursement by the federal VA.

On, or about, July 1st, a director will be hired to oversee the project and recommend a design firm.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – Heidi Audette:

Heidi Audette, WDVA Public Information Officer and Legislative Liaison provided a handout of all bills related to veterans. She defined an “agency request bill” as one that has the support of the Governor.

For additional information, she requested the public sign up for the agency Listserv or to go to the agency website at www.dva.wa.gov.

EMBLEM FUND – Dennis Primoli:

Dennis Primoli, chair of the VAAC subcommittee for the Emblem Fund, announced the winners of this year's grants. Sales of emblems have been stimulated with the new armed forces license plates. A Request For Proposals (RFP) goes out once a year. The grants are funded by the sale of license plate emblems.

The winners are:

Northport American Legion	\$1,137.50
City of Sultan	\$4,000.00
American Veterans Traveling Tribute, Inc.	\$1,000.00
Tacoma Historical Society	\$2,000.00
Squaxin Veterans Memorial Committee	\$1,000.00
Oak Harbor School District #201	\$3,000.00
The Chuck Semancik Memorial Foundation	\$2,500.00
VFW Post 11401 Memorial Fund	\$2,000.00
Pt. Gamble S'Klallam Foundation	\$1,000.00
American Legion (Morton)	\$1,500.00

PATRIOTS PRIDE FOUNDATION OF WASHINGTON – John Lee:

John Lee introduced Gregg Reynolds, Treasurer of the Patriots Pride Foundation of Washington, a non-profit entity organized by WDVA to provide assistance to homeless veterans and other veterans in need.

Mr. Reynolds sent the regards of Dr. Les Burger, president of the organization. He announced a golf tournament on August 2nd at Indian Summer Golf Course to raise funds for the foundation. Brochures were available at the meeting. The foundation's website is www.patriotspridefoundation.org.

VETERANS INNOVATIONS PROGRAM – Tom Riggs:

Tom Riggs, from Camp Murray, provided a briefing on the two parts of the Veterans Innovations Program.

Examples of instances where the fund helped veterans were provided. The Defenders' Fund has a \$500 limit, per person. The amount was questioned by a member of the VAAC and Tom replied that \$1,000 would be more realistic for the types of issues that arise. Back utilities, deposits, etc. usually fall in the \$700 to \$1,000 range.

Grants from the individual grant program are approved by WDVA up to \$5,000. The board agreed that Ric Price, of WDVA, and Tom Riggs could approve up to \$5,000 in grant money for an individual. From \$5,000 to \$10,000 the approval of the program manager, Jim Rising, is necessary. More than \$10,000 must be approved by the board.

COMMANDERS CALL:

Veterans Service Organization commanders were invited to speak.

Charles Kelly, American Legion Commander, noted the presence of many American Legion members at the meeting. He commended Bill Schrier for his leadership on the VAAC and also appreciates the service officers working across organization lines to help veterans.

Gary Pearson (PVA) introduced Skip Dreps who made a plea for SB5340, which deals with the definition of "disability" and the issue that the disability must be visible.

A veteran asked for information on the Port Angeles CBOC. Bill stated the priority list starts with Wenatchee, which opens in March, North Sound (Bellingham or Mt. Vernon) is next. The South Sound is not on the table and the Port Angeles CBOC's timeframe is after that, and unknown.

Fred George (AMVETS) appreciates the service officers working together. He introduced Tom Hinman, president of the Puget Sound USO, who stated his area is from Ft. Lewis to Whidbey Island and as far east as Yakima. They have a mobile canteen if anyone needs them at an event.

Dennis Primoli cautioned there will be additional veterans in the coming years and funding will be needed to support them.

Lloyd Burroughs mentioned the closure of the Severely Disabled Program at Madigan Hospital and the need to have such a program in place.

Barry Pfundt thanked WDVA for the presentation on how the National Guard is being helped and plans to continue to provide resources.

Meeting adjourned.